

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 3RD-4TH, 2022 // BOOK OF JAMES

### RECEIVE (JAMES 1:19-21) QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK

We are to be quick to hear and slow to talk both toward other people and toward God.

- The command to be quick to listen calls for **an eagerness to hear and obey God**.
- Trials (v. 2-12) can easily consume us and cause us to listen less, and when our listening slows, we are quick to speak.

### SLOW TO ANGER

The challenge to be slow to become angry warns against hostile, bitter feelings.

- We cannot hear God if we remain distracted with resentment and hatred.
- Human anger produces divisions and often comes from selfish ambition.
- When the world looks at the Church, does it see division or unity?

### GET RID OF... AND HUMBLY RECEIVE

In order to receive the implanted Word, we have to loosen the grips and open our hands.

- When we hold on tightly to our old life, it is difficult to receive His Word.
- **We are not going to change without God's Word.** When we learn to listen carefully to Him, then we can begin to live a life that pleases Him.

### OBEDIENCE (JAMES 1:22-25) NOT HEARERS ONLY

Though one problem is that we don't listen to the Word, another is that **we often ONLY listen and do nothing about it.**

- This doesn't minimize the importance of hearing God's Word. It emphasizes the need for action. God wants a listener to become a disciple, **an obedient follower of Jesus.**

### BE DOERS OF THE WORD

Mirrors show us a problem so that we can sort it out right away. God's Word is to have a similar effect.

- **We are supposed to act on what it shows us right away.** God's Word shows us how to live and our need for Him.
- It is **not enough to just understand** what it says. We need to be doers of the Word.

### RESULT OF OBEDIENCE

If we obey God's Word, we will be blessed. This blessing is enjoyed during life now, not just at the end of time.

- **Surrendering to God is intended to change us, today.** We need to think and pray carefully about how it applies to us. As we live by it, obeying its teaching, we discover freedom.

### REAL FREEDOM

Western society tends to think of freedom in terms of the absence of restriction. If we remove all constraints, we're "free"!

- In the Bible, **real freedom is the right kind of constraint.** Every command that God gives us is **purely out of His love for us and a desire for us to flourish as His "firstfruits."**

### PURE RELIGION (JAMES 1:26-27) EVIDENCE OF OBEDIENCE

**Obedience to God's Word changes us.** The presence or absence of obedience shows whether or not we practice "pure religion."

- There are three marks of someone who has an authentic relationship with Jesus: controlling the tongue, looking after orphans and widows, and keeping oneself unstained from the world.

## OUR WORDS

Controlling the tongue is so important that James devoted most of ch. 3 to this topic.

- If we hear, receive, and become a doer of the Word, then our words will be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Do we honor God with how we speak?
- **"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"** (Matthew 12:34).

## OUR LOVE FOR OTHERS

Obedying God's Word will give us a heart of genuine compassion and true engagement.

- We will be determined to care for the needy, the most destitute and vulnerable. **Their distress will matter to us. We will not be calloused** to it but responsive.
- God Himself expresses His fatherhood in **caring for the helpless** (Psalm. 68:5).

## OUR HOLINESS (SET APART)

Being a doer of God's Word will result in one being unstained from the world.

- This demands a freedom from contaminations by the world. The culture of the world is loud, and unfortunately, it has caused Christians to tune out the Bible.
- As "firstfruits," **we're to live with intentionality and purpose.**

## HEAR THE WORD

- In order to hear the Word, we need to tune out the loud noises around us.
- Talk less and listen more. Show a genuine interest in people and God.
- If we have bitter and hostile feelings, we need God's help to remove this.
- "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3).

## RECEIVE THE WORD (MATTHEW 13)

- What's the posture of our heart?
- Some have a hardened heart (concrete). The Word doesn't take root at all.
- Some bank on emotions (rocky soil). It takes root, but doesn't go deep. When trials come, they give up.
- Some still love other gods (crowded with thorns). It takes root and starts to grow...
- The plant begins to grow, but it's surrounded by a lot of weeds.
- Some people have a posture of surrender (good soil). It's soft, not hard. It's deep, not shallow. It's clean, not cluttered.
- This heart posture will lead us to receive the Word and be **transformed into the "firstfruits" He designed us to be.**

## DOER OF THE WORD (MATTHEW 7:24-27)

- Obedience to His Word leads to a firm foundation that stands forever.
- Disobedience to His Word leads to an unstable foundation that will collapse.
- **Look in the mirror.** Our words, our concern for others, and what we spend our time, energy, and money on will show if we are a doer of the Word or a hearer only.

## LISTEN AND OBEY

- "Search me, God and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalms 139:23-24).
- Asking God to reveal darkness in our heart is a great place to start. (Hearing.)
- Acting on what He reveals to us is where we need to be. (Doing.)